UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/49/431
26 September 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-ninth session
Agenda item 37 (b)

STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

International assistance to Sierra Leone in the area of relief and rehabilitation of war-affected areas

Report of the Secretary-General

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Liberian civil war, which initially started as a localized conflict, spilled over into Sierra Leone on 23 March 1991 resulting in unprecedented loss of life and destruction of property. Over half a million Sierra Leoneans displaced by the war are living in destitute conditions in camps all over the country. An estimated 370,000 people have fled to neighbouring Guinea and Liberia. Of the country's 12 administrative districts, 7 have been directly affected by the war, namely, Kailahun, Kenema, Kono, Pujehun, Bo, Bonthe and, recently, Tonkolili, with more than 1.1 million people directly affected by the war.

2. The escalation of the conflict, resulting in large numbers of displaced persons and refugees, has increased the pressure on a very fragile economy and an already overburdened social infrastructure and services (education, health, housing, water and sanitation).

3. Before rebel incursions in 1990 and 1991, primary school enrolment in the affected areas was approximately 89,114, with a breakdown of 43,807 boys and 24,807 girls, with 2,922 teachers spread over 384 schools. Secondary enrolment was about 18,595 in 38 secondary schools, which had 899 teachers. These figures represent a severe under-enrolment of children, particularly at the primary level. In addition, school buildings, furniture and teaching and learning materials were inadequate. The damage and/or destruction of these limited facilities has further exacerbated the problem of access to education.

4. Access to health care by the vast majority of people in the affected areas is also constrained by limited facilities.

5. Prior to the war, the health needs of the 265,000 people (1990 estimate) of Kailahun district were met by 14 community health centres, 28 community health posts, 6 maternal and child health posts and 3 hospitals. Of these, the only ones functioning currently are 2 hospitals.

6. The nine chiefdoms in Kenema district directly affected by the war had pre-war health facilities of 2 hospitals, 5 community health centres, 17 community health posts and 12 maternal and child health posts. Many of these health facilities were damaged and/or destroyed by the war.

7. Pujehun district had, prior to the war, 8 community health centres, 7 community health posts, 15 maternal and child health posts and 1 government hospital. The two chiefdoms in Bo district affected by the war had only 2 community health centres and 7 maternal and child health posts prior to the war. These facilities have been disrupted by the war.

8. The population of Bonthe district prior to the war received health service from 7 community health centres, 11 community health posts, 1 maternal and child health post, 2 hospitals and 2 clinics. Some of these health facilities have been damaged and need to be rehabilitated.

9. Although Sierra Leone possesses sufficient water in the form of surface and underground water resources to serve its needs, it is estimated that only 12 per cent of the rural population have access to safe drinking water, while good sanitation facilities are estimated to be available to only 10 per cent. The war has damaged and/or destroyed the existing facilities, thereby exposing the affected communities to health hazards.

II. INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

10. Since the outbreak of the war, World Food Programme (WFP) assistance to Sierra Leone refugees and internally displaced populations has been channelled through a regional emergency operation, for which a total commitment of 539,000 tons of basic commodities has been allocated, with deliveries amounting to over 300,000 tons. Food has also been supplied to Sierra Leone on a bilateral basis, mainly from the European Community (EC) and the United States of America, through Catholic Relief Services (CRS), which distributed a total of 21,563 tons of food during 1991-1993.

11. International Action against Hunger (AICF) has supplied nutritionists who conduct nutrition surveys among the population under 12 years old. Based on their findings, six therapeutic and supplementary feeding centres were established in camps (covering 65,000 people) and in towns and villages in Kailahun, Kenema and Kono to nourish displaced children, while dry rations were given to pregnant and lactating mothers.

12. In the area of water and sanitation, wells have been the main source of water in camps for displaced persons. In Kailahun and Kenema, the Government,

through the department of Energy and Power in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), dug 100 communal wells and upgraded existing ones, while AICF and EC/UNICEF supported construction of latrines and wells in Kabala, Makeni, Masingbi and Ngotown camps.

13. For health care, the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, supported by the African Reinsurance Corporation (AFRICARE), provided health care through 12 clinics in Kailahun and Kenema. Drugs have been supplied by UNICEF. CRS runs the clinic at Gondama camp, while the Department of Health takes care of children under five years old. In Pujehun, CRS runs a mobile clinic which accompanies its food supply, while AICF has health delivery units particularly targeted to children under five.

14. In the area of education, UNICEF has provided furniture and teaching and learning materials to displaced and refugee schools in Kenema and Segbwema. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat has provided assistance for reconstruction of schools in Segbwema. A total of four schools were reroofed and refurbished.

15. The intervention of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been in the field of agriculture, i.e., rehabilitation of plantation crops (cocoa, coffee and oil-palm) in Kenema, Kailahun, Kono and Gondama camps with a large displaced population from Pujehun district. The programme covers the period January to December 1994 with a total input of US$ 310,000.

16. A quick-action programme was launched by the Government in collaboration with United Nations organizations in June 1993 soliciting assistance from the United Nations and the donor community to meet the immediate relief needs of the affected population. This effort did not yield much dividend, as only limited quantities of food and shelter items were provided and some pledges made were not honoured.

17. A project funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and executed by the Office for Project Services, "Assistance to rehabilitation in war-affected areas", was initiated in July 1993. The project was located in three chiefdoms in Kenema district (Koya, Dama and Gaura) and three chiefdoms in Pujehun district (Barri, Pejeh and Sowa). Emphasis was initially on agricultural rehabilitation aimed at assisting displaced and returnee farmers produce their own food and reduce their dependence on food relief assistance. It was envisaged that joint efforts with other donors would subsequently contribute to an integrated programme of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected areas. Project achievements included a coverage of 3,854 farmers in 186 groups in 43 villages in Pujehun district and 21,362 farmers in 142 villages in Kenema district. The total area cultivated under different crops are 3,576 acres of rice, 1,500 acres of groundnuts, 512 acres of maize, 67 acres of cassava, 553 acres of vegetables and 19 acres of sweet potatoes.

18. A project to strengthen the National Rehabilitation Commission (NARECOM) of Sierra Leone, funded by UNDP from US$ 100,000 in special programme resources funds, was initiated in January 1994. The project's goal was to help strengthen the capacity of NARECOM on a sustainable basis to fulfil its mandate as the

national body responsible for coordinating relief and rehabilitation programmes. The main outputs of the project were:

(a) The consultant's final report;

(b) A discussion paper on the recognition of NARECOM;

(c) A technical assistance package for NARECOM;

(d) A draft project document for expanded assistance to NARECOM.

19. The project identified structural and operational weaknesses of NARECOM and proposed a new structure with a small and highly professional staff. It also proposed a technical package for NARECOM focusing on:

(a) Design and installation of a management information system;

(b) Identification, planning and carrying out of training of NARECOM staff;

(c) Assistance in the preparation of national policy guidelines for relief and rehabilitation;

(d) External monitoring and evaluation of the strengthening process.

20. A United Nations inter-agency mission organized at the request of Sierra Leone's Head of State visited the country from 4 to 14 October 1993 to carry out an assessment of the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction needs of the war-affected areas. The mission concluded that the preconditions for successful rehabilitation and reconstruction in Sierra Leone included, in the short term, the cessation of hostilities, and, in the longer term, sustained peace and stability in the subregion. Continuing stability in the subregion requires contingency plans, such as for the spontaneous return of refugees. The nature of the crisis in Sierra Leone calls for a rehabilitation and reconstruction effort designed to address causal factors; relief and settlement measures should lay the foundation for capacity building and sustainable human development in the future. The needs of women, children and youths should be addressed specifically.